

#### **AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

Claims 13-26 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 27-39 are added. The following is the status of the claims of the above-captioned application, as amended.

Claims 1-26 (Canceled).

Claim 27 (New). A method for improving the nutritional value of an animal feed, comprising adding to the animal feed an acid-stable protease that comprises an amino acid sequence having an identity of at least 90% to SEQ ID NO: 1.

Claim 28 (New). The method of claim 27, wherein the protease comprises an amino acid sequence having an identity of at least 95% to SEQ ID NO: 1.

Claim 29 (New). The method of claim 27, wherein the protease has a pH optimum of 8-11 and a temperature optimum of at least 70°C.

Claim 30 (New). The method of claim 27, wherein the dosage of the protease is 0.01-200 mg protease enzyme protein per kg animal feed.

Claim 31 (New). A method for improving the nutritional value of a vegetable protein, comprising adding an acid-stable protease to the vegetable protein or protein source, wherein the protease comprises an amino acid sequence having an identity of at least 90% to SEQ ID NO: 1.

Claim 32 (New). The method of claim 31, wherein the protease comprises an amino acid sequence having an identity of at least 95% to SEQ ID NO: 1.

Claim 33 (New). The method of claim 31, wherein the protease has a pH optimum of 8-11 and a temperature optimum of at least 70°C.

Claim 34 (New). The method of claim 31, wherein the vegetable protein source comprises soybean.

Claim 35 (New). A method for improving the nutritional value of an animal feed, comprising adding to the animal feed an acid-stable *Nocardiopsis* protease.

Claim 36 (New). The method of claim 35, wherein the protease is a *Nocardiopsis alba* protease.

Claim 37 (New). The method of claim 35, wherein the protease comprises an amino acid sequence of SEQ ID NO: 2.

Claim 38 (New). The method of claim 35, wherein the protease has a pH optimum of 8-11 and a temperature optimum of at least 70°C.

Claim 39 (New). The method of claim 35, wherein the dosage of the protease is 0.01-200 mg protease enzyme protein per kg animal feed.